

Britain's Great Little Railways

Newsletter 73



November 2018

Autumn General Meeting at the Bure Valley Railway

Bright sunshine and a clear blue sky greeted those members who attended the Autumn General Meeting at the Bure Valley Railway. An early coffee in the station cafe cleared away the travel tiredness of those who came up on the day and was welcome by those who stayed overnight. The turnout for the meeting was on the low side with 16 railways attending and 29 members.



The meeting was chaired for the first time by Iain Dinnes, our new Chairman, and was quickly in its stride. The minutes of the meeting has been circulated to all members. Iain especially thanked Andrew Barnes, Susan Munday and their team for hosting the meeting and providing such beautiful weather.



Following the meeting Andrew gave the members a guided tour of the engine shed, work shop and fabrication areas. We also learnt about the history of the railway both as a standard gauge and since its conversion to narrow gauge. A great deal of hard work has gone into providing the excellent facilities that they now have both at Aylsham and Wroxham.

Then to a lunch of roast beef with all the trimmings and a choice of tasty deserts followed by boarding our special train to Wroxham some nine miles away.



The journey itself, in beautifully restored carriages, (or were they new?) was a scenic delight. At Wroxham most of the members climbed the stairs to the signal box both to view the box and also the scenery from such a high standpoint. Before leaving the station the members lined up in front of "Mark Timothy", our train engine for a photo opportunity. Then back to Aylsham to start the long journey back home. In fact the journey was exceptional with the 55 miles on the M25 between the M11 junction and the M3 junction completed at 70 mph without ever having to slow down - amazing.

All in all a fantastic day out.

To all those who couldn't make



it, you missed a really good one. *Photo on front page by Katie Melton*

BGLR NEWS

No decision has yet been made on the venue or the date of the 2019 AGM and Spring General Meeting. The Chairman has had 4 offers from railways to host it but one key consideration for this meeting is to maximise the attendance and thus the distribution of the brochures and posters. A second consideration is the cost of getting them to the venue from the printers. As soon as a decision has been made I will email all

members with the details. Subscription renewal is underway for 2019, please pay promptly to ensure that your railway is on the brochure and poster

HRA, LEGISLATION, & SAFETY REPORT

BGLR is a corporate member of the Heritage Railway Association. Members can read HRA "members only" publications on www.hra.uk.com/ by entering the username bglr and the password kcnsy37

There is nothing new to report since the minutes of the Autumn meeting were distributed.

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Littlehampton Miniature Railway 70th Anniversary Gala

The railway celebrated its 70th anniversary on the weekend of 23rd and 24th June 2018. The line has been in operation since the Whitsun weekend of 15th – 17th May 1948. Originally, trains were hauled by two 4-



6-4 steam locomotives built by TJ Thurston; a variety of internal combustion locos have operated on the railway since 1984.

In order to celebrate this significant anniversary; in addition to the three resident IC locomotives - Albert, Philippa and Daisy - steam traction returned to the line in the form of Sherpa from the Fairbourne Railway.

Further attractions included two 5 inch gauge portable tracks, one offering the opportunity to drive a train; Model traction engine rides; a barrel organ and a display of models from Worthing and District Society of Model Engineers. Graham Billington from the Fairbourne Railway attended with a well stocked sales stand.



The weekend was officially opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony, which was performed by railway author and retired Nine Elms top link driver, Clive Groome.

The weather was superb all weekend and the gala was well attended both by enthusiasts and families having a good day out. Trains ran to full capacity throughout both days. On the Saturday evening, once the visitors had gone home, the volunteers enjoyed a fish and chip supper followed by more trips behind Sherpa and the opportunity for footplate rides.

The Mayor of Littlehampton - Billy Blanchard-Cooper - adopted the railway as one of his fundraising charities in 2017. As an honoured guest, he was treated to a footplate ride on the Sunday, an experience that he thoroughly enjoyed.

The Cafés at both ends of the line and the gardens, lake and playground at Mewsbrook Park were also enjoyed by many visitors. All in all it was a successful and enjoyable weekend. We are now looking forward to the next anniversary! *Dirk Shepherd*

Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway

Brief summary of 2018 season.

This season has seen the long awaited return to service of No6 'Samson' after a complete rebuild, and, she certainly does look the part. We have had a full and varied programme of events throughout the year. These included our usual Gala, complete with 'River Mite' visiting from the Ravensglass; the 90th anniversary of the line opening to Dungeness and the annual Bus Rally held in September. This popular event saw 40+ buses, coaches and taxis in the New Romney and Dungeness car parks, with a few of the exhibits giving free rides between the two stations.



Like all other railways, the Romney has had a difficult summer season and this has been felt in particular by our operations/retail teams. Like others we had many heat related issues but are proud to say our staff coped with everything that was put in their way without drama. Revenue for 2018 looks to be running a little below last year (3%). 2017 was made even more pleasurable as it was the 90th birthday of the railway opening and was a record season for us. We are cautious about the 2019 revenue forecasts due to the possible M20/M25 lorry park if Brexit implodes! A point of interest, this year's Bus Rally was the best revenue earner of

the year – especially the catering side – definitely due to all those bacon rolls being consumed.

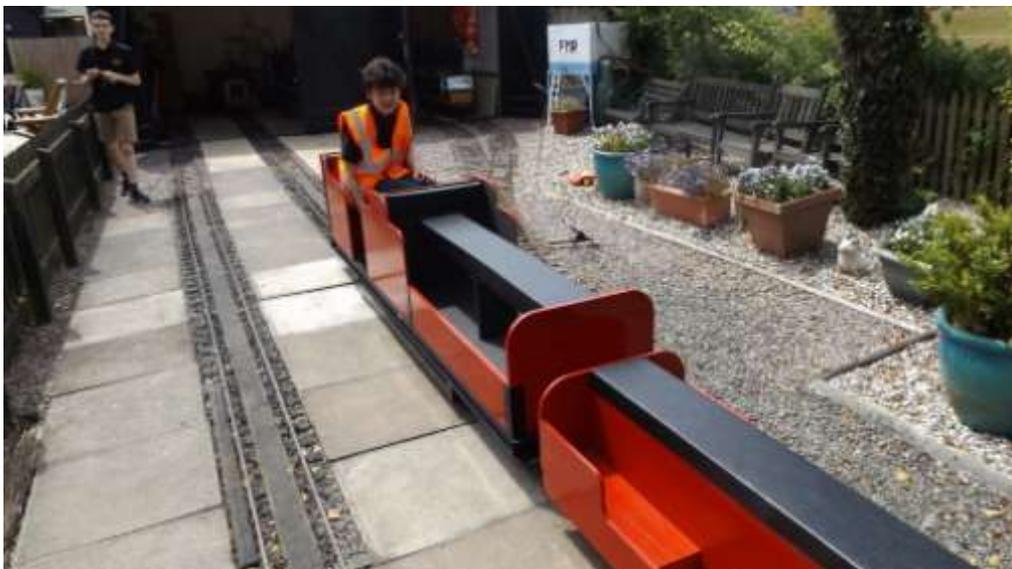
Disregarding the possible problems on the motorways we are looking forward to 2019 and we will be advertising (by the time you read this) for four new Drivers and an Operations Manager, all challenging but rewarding posts.

We are now getting our Elf costumes dusted off for Christmas. The bookings already in suggest the trains will be full again this year...not long to wait now!!

That just leaves us at the RHDR to wish all our fellow BGLR members a great Santa Special and a happy and prosperous 2019. Happy Holiday. *Peter Carpenter*

Fancott Miniature Railway

The Railway has had a good season. The Halloween trains were well received but we did get very wet as it rained from the first train to the last one.



All of the carriages have had an upgrade and the new guards van can carry both the public as well as the guard. All of the rolling stock now have vacuum brakes plus a portable vac pump which we can move around between the Locos.

The owners of the Fancott pub put up new fence around the garden and the railway which makes things a lot safer as the old one was very easy to climb over. The volunteers put up a tunnel over the summer and this now gives us a storage area for the rolling stock.



Now the winter work starts. One of our new volunteers is big into electrics/electronics and is going to put a track circuit all around the railway plus an upgrade to the signal box with a new panel. There will be a new signal

out on the railway and a new set of points at the tunnel so that we can join to the track that has been laid in the tunnel. In addition all the station point works will be electrified as we have bought some new electric point motors off of ebay. This will allow the signal box have control of all the points but they can still be operated by the driver if needed when the box is not in use.

In 2019 we are going to bring Steam back to the railway and have a resident loco on site. We are looking at a Stafford as we think this will comfortably get up the Fancott gradient. If not a Romulus but we need one that has a marine fire box, so we can get all the fire out before we put it back on shed. I wonder why that might be? - the devastating 2015 fire at the railway might be something to do with it. *Ron Stanbridge*

North Bay Railway

The North Bay Railway enjoyed a good season this year, a noticeable improvement on last year.

Last winter we took on the ambitious project of relaying our passing loop at Beach. This included the making of two sets of points, the first since we took over the running of the Railway. Hindered by the weather, this project remained unfinished over the season, still requiring final packing and ballasting. We hope to complete this project before Christmas, after which we will start on our next project of relaying.

We found the HSE document 'Rail track and associated equipment for use underground in mines' very helpful and applicable to us despite what the name suggests! It is found here www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/mines06.pdf.



We have had a difficult year just keeping things going, we lost the use of our turntable early on due to vandalism which meant we had to top and tail services for a few weeks. Great fun but not easy on running costs and staffing.

For our gala in September welcomed No 1933 'Poseidon' back into traffic after an overhaul and a repaint. This work was carried out by our volunteers and engineering staff. Most of the painting was sprayed at a local car body shop, but the prep work and the painting of bits too large to transport was done by Nick Skelton. We received a generous donation by Chris Yeoman and family towards this project. It is hoped to use this locomotive to reduce the annual mileage of Neptune and Triton.



Another locomotive joined our fleet this year also. The 'Steamplex', famous for attending 'Quirks and Curiosities 2' on the Ffestinog Railway. The gauge has been altered to

fit NBR and work has begun on improvements. This locomotive will be used more for its novelty than hauling service trains regularly. *Article by Steve Johnson, photo of "Poseidon" by Phil Jackson*

Thompson Park Railway

It really is amazing how time flies. Just over twelve months ago we were hosting the AGM and annual gala of the seven and a quarter gauge society and now I am reporting on another record breaking year at Thompson park. The year has not been without some disasters another attempted break in but our new alarm system worked and scared them away since then we have not had any more break in attempts.



The year got off to a very slow start with both March and April's rides down on 2017 but the next three months showed a dramatic upturn in attendance with May June and July all turning into record months. Out of the last three months of our season only September improved on previous years. I am happy to report though that 2018 saw us break the 20000 rides barrier a new record for the club.

One of several features of Thompson Park Railway is offering private birthday party bookings for one hour before we start running with the public, this year we have had 13 parties booked and only one was cancelled because the park had to be closed with high winds. Yes you've guessed it the thirteenth. To compensate we supplied the parents with three complimentary super saver tickets which we hope they will use next year. On our birthday parties we always supply all children attending the party with a wrist



band so if they want to they can carry on with free rides for the rest of the day.

Two of our other features are our Teddy Bears picnic and our Super Heroes Sunday these take place on the last Sundays of July and August. Free rides are offered to all children who bring a Teddy or who dress up in fancy dress unfortunately this year because of very poor weather on the two Sundays we had to cancel both events. So it was decided by the membership of the society to hold a FREE rides Sunday on

the last Sunday in September. We gave free rides to everybody its amazing what the word FREE can do, we took 800 rides on the day!!

As you have probably read before we are known locally as ' the lollipop line ' because we give out lollipops at the end of the ride this year we have given out in excess of 17000 lollipops.

We purchased a new locomotive in September to add to our fleet 'Sir Richard' (UP 6602) is already serving us well and along with our newly refurbished class 91'Swallow' we hope to be able to pull passengers for many years to come.

At the end of September we decided to lift part of our trackwork in the woods that had become a little worse for wear as it has been down for over 12 years this meant closing part of the circuit, to compensate during October the ride went around the beech gardens twice. We are hoping to reopen this stretch of track in time for the visit of Santa on the first weekend in December. The railway closes after the visit of Santa and reopens to the public in March 2019. Seasons greetings to you all and we hope you have a prosperous 2019. *Michael Bailey*

Moors Valley Railway

The weekend of 22nd – 23rd September was our 'Tinkerbell 50th Anniversary' event. Alongside a recently over-hauled Tinkerbell were fifteen visiting engines from across the country, including all five from the



batch of Tinkerbell locos built in 1978 celebrating their 40th birthday. With so much going on, our signalmen were certainly kept busy with both freight and passenger trains throughout the weekend.

Everyone seemed to have a great time despite the torrential rain! Paul Ash, one of our volunteers at the railway, has written a book to mark the occasion which has already proved very popular with over 200 copies sold! 'Tinkerbell – The First 50 Years' is available to purchase for £6.50 (plus £1.50 postage) from the railway shop or call us on 01425 471415 to get your copy.



October half term proved busy with some dry weather finally! We held another 'Sunday Special' event where Day Rover ticket holders have access to the 'Dorset Flyer' service, double reverse runs and a free hot drink which proved to be popular once again.

We are currently in the process of setting up for our popular Santa Specials on 8th, 9th, 15th and 16th December. Tickets are continuing to sell well, with three dates completely sold out and only a few tickets remaining on

8th December. This remains our most popular event of the year with bookings opening in August due to demand!



The workshop has also been a hive of activity building points, rail benders, rail gauges, point levers and supplying over 200 metres of rail, 400 sleepers and



fixings to a private customer in Banbury. As well as this, we have supplied over 800 metres of rail to a private customer in Norfolk. For more information about rail supply and prices, please call the railway shop on 01425 471415 or email shop@moorsvalleyrailway.co.uk.

Eastleigh Lakeside Steam Railway



The Summer months now seem to be a distant memory as we move into Autumn and, as Keats described it, "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness".

However, looking back over the Summer, it has been a season of highs and lows. The exceptional weather gave the opportunity to many holiday makers to experience the delights of riding behind steam locomotives and to enjoy the country park, but there were occasions that were tinged with sadness. The first was the



Summer Gala on the weekend of 21st & 22nd July when two of Lakeside's locomotives ended their careers, for the time being, as they were withdrawn from traffic for major overhauls. Another event was the final DOWT as the brand owners no longer want Lakeside to run these special days but overshadowing both these events was the death on 20th August of long term friend of the railway, Arthur Thompson. Arthur had entrusted the care and maintenance of his locomotives, No: 6100 'Royal Scot', and No: 6220 'Coronation' to Eastleigh Lakeside Railway and his presence at special events was always warmly anticipated. He will be sorely missed.



Returning to the Summer Gala; it was Britannia Class No: 70055 'Rob Roy' together with No:7 'Sandy River' that said farewell and it was a suitably fitting occasion as these two ended the weekend double heading the final train around the circuit including a 'reverse run' that is in the opposite direction from the usual. A cacophony of sound from whistles and hooters accompanied the two locomotives as they finished their duties, and headed for the steaming bay to have their fires dropped and to await a future major overhaul.



It was over the weekend of August 11th & 12th that they railway played host to many visiting locomotives for the Annual 'Big Engines' Gala. It was exciting to see motive power from our near neighbours Moors Valley Railway and some from railways a little further away including South Downs and Ingfield Manor. One of the highlights was seeing John Littlechild's 2-6-2 V2 No: 4750 'Starlight' operating on the railway and causing great excitement amongst the resident drivers many of whom queued up to have a go at this splendid engine.

It was gratifying to see vast crowds descend on the railway, on 8th & 9th September as the last DOWT event was played out. The local media had picked up on the news which gave some the impetus needed to be there. Every single train was full to capacity and many of the visitors expressed sadness that this would be the last time that 'Thomas' and friends would be



at Lakeside, and commiserated with the volunteers. Although there was this underlying sadness, the show, according to the old maxim, must go on and the Fat Controller continued to sign numerous certificates and read stories, whilst Rusty, the station cleaner, entertained many with his particular brand of humour and magic. Once again, in order to commemorate a special event, a multi-headed train was run but this time all three named characters, 'Thomas', 'Henry' and 'Gordon' provided the motive power.



The half term holiday provided another opportunity for daily running, and the week was finished off in style with a 'Spooktacular' Hallowe'en event. Many of the volunteers spent considerable time decorating the tunnel with flashing lights, lasers and strange illusions designed to chill the spine before they passed through a graveyard on the way to Parkway Station which was adorned in a ghostly fashion with atmospheric music playing eerily through the speakers. The locomotives hauling the trains were suitably decorated with skulls, flashing spiders and dead beasts together with strangely adorned drivers! To complete the entertainment, ghost stories were narrated to the assembled passengers whilst discordant sounds added to the atmosphere.



Now, essential routine maintenance of locomotives and rolling stock seems to be the order of the day whilst preparations are made for the forthcoming Christmas Holidays and daily running as well as the 'Mince Pie Specials' . *Article and photographs by Lionel Kay.*

Top: Britannia, 7500 Rob Roy and Sandy River double heading the final train of the day 22nd July 2018; Athelstan from Moors Valley at the big engines Gala; V2 No 4750 leaving Park Way at the Gala; Ingfield Manor Railway's Patriot and Royal Scot double heading; Flying Scotsman from the

South Downs Railway on shed; Thomas, Henry and Gordon triple heading the last train of the final DOWT event in September; bottom The three character locomotives at Parkway Station on the last DOWT event.

Great Laxey Mine Railway

Where does time go to with Christmas nearly upon us. The Railway's main operating season concluded at the end of September and will recommence next Easter.



The month of September had an exciting start with MER 125, a celebration of 125 years of the Manx Electric Railway. This event organised by Isle of Man Transport included a "Birthday Party" in Laxey which the Great Laxey Mine Railway was privileged to be part of. The main focus was on the Manx Electric Railway with electric trams and rolling stock on public display. However the historic and unique Douglas Bay Horse Tramway was also represented with a carriage together with a real Clydesdale horse on show. The horse was "stabled" in the goods yard of the former Manx Electric Railway's Laxey Goods Shed. The Railway is heavily involved with this historic building and yard as thanks to the hard work and enthusiasm of our Treasurer, Andrew Scarffe, there is now a permanent exhibition explaining the link between the Isle of Man Post Office and the Manx Electric Railway which collected the post from Post Boxes along the MER route between Douglas and Ramey for many years. The Goods Shed is also used by the Railway for restoration projects with Andrew being the major contributor and organiser. The day ended with the Director of Man Transport, Ian Longworth, cutting a birthday cake in the form of a very large electric tram.

The Railway's involvement demonstrates our commitment the wider historic transport heritage of the Isle Man. Our volunteers now hope to begin the restoration of the Goods Shed which will provide the Railway with a secure ongoing work area.

The Railway also benefited from a visit by David Vaughan of the magazine "Old Glory" as part as a wider Isle of Man Transport initiative and likewise on 15 September we hosted the Heritage Railway Association.

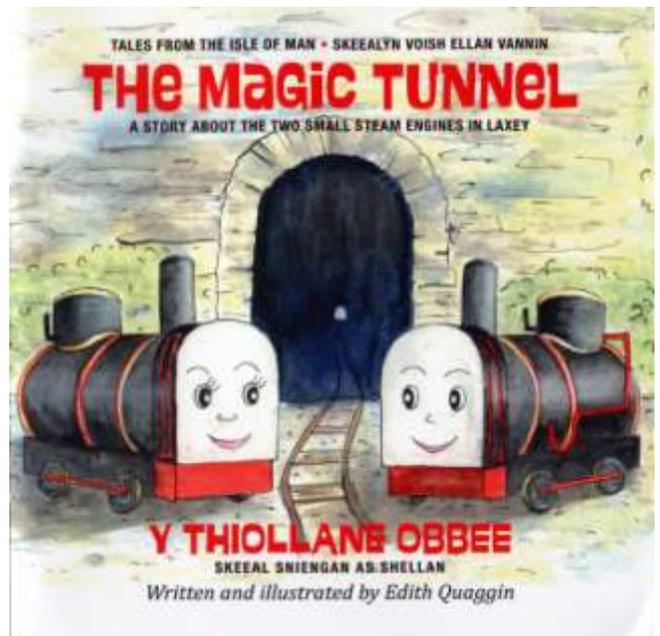


The annual visit of International Rotary students took place again who were provided with a ride on the Railway as well as an explanation of the mining history of Laxey. A volunteer presented to the Rotary Club of Douglas luncheon on 10 October which was a pleasant opportunity to engage with the Island's business community which is very supportive of the Railway.

Volunteer Glenn Bannister qualified as a Driver after a month's intensive documented training and even the Company Secretary of ten years qualified as a Guard.

Volunteer Edith Quaggin's book, "The Magic Tunnel" has sold the first print run and a second run has been commissioned. Edith has very kindly donated all profits to support the Railway. Worth a read. The Manx language version of the book together with illustrations will become display boards for the enclosure of our latest project, a Play Train and picnic area at the end of the Railway made possible by donations from the Lockington Marshall Trust and Celton Manx. Play Trains are not cheap to either purchase or erect! The official opening will be next Easter.

However the end of the main operating season then leads into the build up and preparation of the Railway's unique Hop-tu-Naa trains and we appreciated the support of the Isle of Man Government initiative "2018 the Year of our Island.". Hop-tu-Naa celebrates the



Celtic New Year and only continues in the Isle of Man. This celebration is completely different to Halloween which has its own heritage. The amount of work involved is significant for three operating days but the results are so worthwhile. The Laxey Mines Research Group also supports the Railway and I guess to put it simple everyone "mucks in!" This also involved engineering work on Ant and Bee which necessitated an early visit from Father Christmas! Now everything has to be dismantled in time for our "Justine's Birthday Christmas Special" on 5 December.

.....then a Christmas break before ongoing maintenance and track work.

Credit across the team for the excellent photographs. A fuller update can be seen on the website www.laxeyminerailway.im or on Facebook for which we are grateful for the efforts of Andy Murdoch, Andrew Scarffe and Ian Smith. All the volunteers at the Great Laxey Mines Railway would like to wish all the organisations in Britain's Great Little Railways "Nollick Ghennal as Blien Vie Noa." *Tony Wild*

Hollycombe enjoys busy end to season

Hollycombe Steam in the Country enjoyed a busy end of season, with every available space in the car park taken for the 'Halloween Fairground at Night' event taking place on Saturday 20 October. Record numbers for this event more than compensated for the wet Saturday evenings experienced on some of the September 'Fairground at Night' dates. A shuttle service linking Liphook Railway Station, Liphook and Hollycombe on the 13th and 20th October was well supported, a service provided in connection with the East Hants Community Railway Partnership. Over the winter months Hollycombe will be replacing sections of its historic Quarry Railway track, ahead of opening just prior to Easter. *Nigel Philpott*



Whitfield Light Railway

For those who don't know, Whitfield Light Railway is a portable miniature railway in 10.25' gauge, mainly doing events in the North West and operating out of Warrington, Cheshire. A trainset on a trailer.

I can't believe it was last January when I was last able to contribute to the BGLR newsletter. Christmas 2017 had just finished and the end of our first season. Now I find my next events are the 26-days Christmas running over the next six weeks and the second season is nearly complete.



The railway started running at Easter and will have operated nearly 140-days this year, up from 63 last year - still largely with steam tram 'Kestrel' and a single coach. 'Otter', our petrol-electric standby loco, has been used particularly on works trains, when the railway is down for a number of days. And I've just been using my sons' tipper truck over 2-weeks for a pumpkin railway.

The season has seen ups and downs. The downs are where you don't cover the cost of your diesel, or only just cover the most direct of costs of the day. Positioning is important at any event - when the railway is placed next to a modern fun fair or there's a tractor-train on-site, that hits your earnings. The weather is also a factor. And the mix of visitors of the right age and approach is important. It's largely the traditional steam and vintage events that have struggled.

The ups - we've had some big events, where we've shifted up to 600 passengers a day. Those that come to mind - Sandbach Transport Festival, Royal Albert Dock Liverpool 'Steam on the

Dock', and The Hayloft pumpkin picking. Other highlights include working with the Lancashire Steam Heritage Festival at the Lancashire Mining Museum, the Lymm Historic Transport Day, and the Manchester Airport Aviation & Transport Festival.

One of the big 'ups' has been building a relationship with The Hayloft Ice Cream & Coffee Shop, local to myself and on the Warrington / Widnes / St. Helens borders. It allowed weekday running during school holidays, which was beyond what I expected this year. It also led to building another 100m of track for pumpkin picking and other halloween activities - when joined with the existing event railway, the overall length was 161m. It was immensely successful, and in one sense proved the viability of the railway going forward. In 12-days, we did 633 return trips, covering 127 miles, and carrying over 3,400 passengers in a combination of singles and return tickets. It blew the capacity of the coach, with queues at each end of the railway.

That railway is now all lifted, as Christmas starts next week at the Llandudno Christmas Fayre and then followed by Notcutts Rivendell Garden Centre in Widnes.

And 2019 plans ... discussions have started and at this stage, without saying too much, I believe I'll be able to focus on events that are worthwhile with the portable railway and also build on the foundations I have at The Hayloft. Less travelling, with less event railway building. *Ian Whitfield*

Swanley New Barn Railway

The SNBR has benefited from some council investment and change of management in the park, which has definitely seen an increase in park patronage. The railway itself has embarked on some projects. A signal gantry has been started, which will hopefully be fully ready for the 2019 season, while our Carriage shed has seen some new front doors and facial boards installed and look a lot better than the old ones. The loco shed also had its leaky roof repaired over the summer months, and we look forward to keeping our engines dry over the winter!

Our oldest engine 'Tulyar' has entered the workshop for a full overhaul, which will see it get a new hydraulic pump. The Kabota power unit has been overhauled off site and returned.

Our newest Steam Engine 'Mrs. Darling' went for a lovely visit to the Tinkerbell 50th event, which was an outstanding gala, enjoyed by a fair few members of our society.

Mrs. Darling waiting departure at the Tinkerbell 50th event at MVR

Also on the steam engine front, 'Owd Rosie' is expecting her new boiler in the next week or two, allowing the full overhaul to continue.

Our Workshop has also seen some investment, with a new lathe and new horizontal mill arriving this year, and new vertical Mill hoping arriving before the new year.

As ever our New Year charity day is planned in, where again we hope to see some visiting steam engines.

Peter Jackson

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